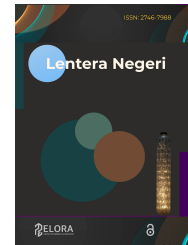




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Underreporting of domestic violence in indonesia: a normative legal analysis of reporting barriers and victim protection (2004–2026)

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence remains a legal and access-to-justice problem because incidents recorded by formal services do not necessarily represent all violence experienced by victims. This study analyzes how documented reporting barriers may disconnect victims from legal protection mechanisms in Indonesia and formulates a legally grounded model for strengthening access to protection. The study uses normative (doctrinal) legal research with statutory and conceptual approaches, examining the Indonesian legal framework in force by September 2026. Primary legal materials comprise Law Number 23 of 2004 on the Elimination of Domestic Violence, Government Regulation Number 4 of 2006 on the Organization and Cooperation for the Recovery of Domestic Violence Victims, and Law Number 3 of 2026 on the Protection of Witnesses and Victims. Official SIMFONI PPA materials are used only as administrative context. A structured supplementary search of PubMed and Google Scholar identified peer-reviewed studies on domestic/intimate partner violence reporting and help-seeking, principally from 2015–2025, with a 2026 systematic review included to capture the latest synthesis. Legal norms were extracted and interpreted doctrinally, while reported barriers in the supporting literature were thematically mapped into five analytical clusters and compared with available protection mechanisms. The synthesis identifies five interrelated clusters: normalization of violence as a private matter; economic dependence and unequal power relations; fear of perpetrators and repeated violence; family pressure, children-related concerns, and stigma; and limited information or institutional access. These barriers can operate before formal reporting and therefore expose a gap between legally guaranteed rights and practical access to those rights. The study proposes a four-stage protection model covering pre-reporting, reporting, protection and handling, and recovery/access to justice. Because no primary victim data were collected, the study does not estimate the prevalence or causal magnitude of underreporting; empirical studies and SIMFONI PPA data are used only to contextualize the doctrinal analysis.



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Introduction

Domestic violence (KDRT) is a legal and social issue that is closely related to the protection of victims' rights and the fulfillment of access to justice. Domestic violence is not limited to physical violence, but also includes psychological violence, sexual violence, and domestic neglect. The characteristics of domestic violence that

take place in the domestic environment pose its own problems because the victim and the perpetrator generally have a close family relationship or personal relationship. These relationships can put victims in a vulnerable position, especially when accompanied by economic dependence, power imbalances, threats, and pressure from family and social environment. Therefore, the problem of domestic violence is not enough to be understood only as an event of violence, but also needs to be seen from the conditions that affect the victim's ability to obtain legal protection and justice (La Jamaa, 2014).

In the Indonesian legal system, the protection of victims of domestic violence has obtained a legal basis through Law Number 23 of 2004 concerning the Elimination of Domestic Violence (PKDRT Law). The law not only regulates forms of domestic violence and criminal responsibility of perpetrators, but also pays attention to the position and rights of victims. Article 10 of the PKDRT Law, for example, gives victims the right to obtain protection, health services, and handling specifically related to the confidentiality of the victim, assistance, legal assistance, and spiritual guidance services (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Pasal 10). The regulatory framework shows that legal policies against domestic violence are not solely oriented towards criminalizing perpetrators, but are also directed at the protection and recovery of victims.

The problem then arises when the existence of legal guarantees is not always followed by the victim's ability to access the available protection mechanisms. Not every domestic violence incident is included in the official reporting and recording system. One of the government's sources of information on violence against women and children is the Online Information System for the Protection of Women and Children (SIMFONI PPA). The system is used to record cases of violence received through various service institutions and provide information about the characteristics of victims, perpetrators, forms of violence, and services received by victims (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak Republik Indonesia, 2025). The 2024 SIMFONI PPA report also explains that the recorded data comes from various service institutions throughout Indonesia and has certain limitations in the recording process (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak Republik Indonesia). Therefore, the data recorded through such systems is important to describe cases that have been identified by service mechanisms, but cannot be seen as an overall representation of violence that occurs in society.

These limitations become important when reporting issues are placed in the context of victim protection. The government itself still acknowledges that there are cases of violence that have not been reported and recorded. These conditions are related to limited access and lack of public knowledge about reporting mechanisms and services (Menteri Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak Republik Indonesia, 2025). This means that there is a possibility of a gap between violence that actually occurs and violence that has successfully entered the formal reporting and recording mechanism. This gap is known in the literature as underreporting.

Underreporting in the context of violence refers to circumstances when the violence experienced by the victim is not reported or is not reflected in the official recording mechanism. Palermo, Bleck, and Peterman show that gender-based violence has underreporting problems so that data obtained through formal reporting mechanisms can provide a lower picture compared to the level of violence that actually occurs (Palermo et al., 2014). The problem is then often described through the concept of tip of the iceberg or iceberg phenomenon, which is a situation when the recorded cases are only a visible part, while some other cases are beyond the reach of the reporting system (Palermo et al., 2014). This concept is relevant to explain that a low number of reports does not automatically indicate a low incidence of domestic violence.

From a legal perspective, underreporting is not only a statistical issue, but is directly related to the effectiveness of victim protection. Unreported violence has the potential to be unconnected to the protection, assistance, legal aid, recovery, and legal processes that have been provided by the state. This issue is important because the PKDRT Law has basically provided various instruments to protect victims. Therefore, the legal issue is not only whether protection norms are in place, but also whether victims are able to access and use these mechanisms when experiencing violence.

The question of underreporting then brings attention to the obstacles that cause victims to not or be reluctant to report the violence they experience. In domestic relationships, the decision to report is not always taken in conditions that are free from pressure. Economic dependence, the existence of children, fear of repeated threats or violence, personal relationships with perpetrators, and concerns about social consequences can influence victims' choices. Research on the protection of victims of domestic violence in Indonesia also shows that fear affects the views or judgments of society on the courage of victims to disclose the violence they experience (Hanafi & Herlina, 2023). These factors show that the decision not to report is inappropriate if it is only understood as a matter of the victim's courage or personal will.

The question of underreporting draws attention to the conditions that make victims unable or reluctant to disclose violence. In domestic relationships, reporting is rarely a decision made free from pressure: economic dependence, children-related concerns, threats, continued contact with the perpetrator, and anticipated social consequences can shape help-seeking. Recent empirical literature similarly shows that help-seeking is constrained by social norms, stigma, safety concerns, economic insecurity, and the expected response of formal institutions (McCleary-Sills et al., 2016; Evans & Feder, 2016; Robinson et al., 2021; Rohn & Tenkorang, 2024). These findings support treating non-reporting as an access problem rather than reducing it to individual courage or willingness.

Reporting barriers are also embedded in household and community power relations. Cross-cultural research indicates that norms that normalize violence, expectations of family privacy, fear of relationship dissolution, immigration or dependency concerns, and inadequate social support can narrow the practical options available to survivors (Satyen et al., 2019; Sultana et al., 2023; Hulley et al., 2023). In legal analysis, these empirically documented constraints are relevant not as direct evidence about the prevalence of Indonesian domestic violence, but as contextual evidence for examining whether legal protection can be reached before, during, and after reporting.

Institutional conditions also matter. Reviews of formal help-seeking identify distrust, lack of information, negative prior responses, weak cultural competence, police or service-provider bias, and fragmented coordination as barriers to formal disclosure (Lippy et al., 2020; Wright et al., 2022; Vicente-Garcia et al., 2026). Vicente-Garcia, La Parra-Casado, and Vives-Cases (2026), for example, synthesized 25 peer-reviewed studies published between 2013 and 2024 and distinguished personal barriers from structural and institutional barriers, including “ideal victim” bias, insufficient training, and weak coordination between legal and police resources.

Normatively, the PKDRT Law has provided protection rights to victims, including the right to obtain protection from various institutions, health services, assistance, legal aid, and other services (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Pasal 10). UU PKDRT also regulates the obligation of the police to provide temporary protection to victims after knowing or receiving reports of domestic violence (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Pasal 16-18). However, the use of these mechanisms in practice is closely related to the victim's ability to enter and use the protection system. When victims face barriers to reporting violence, normatively guaranteed rights may not be optimally realized.

It is at this point that underreporting needs to be placed in the perspective of access to justice. Access to justice not only means the availability of the rule of law and law enforcement institutions, but also includes a person's ability to use legal mechanisms to obtain protection and solutions to the problems they face. In the context of domestic violence, fear, economic dependence, family pressure, social stigma, power imbalances, limited information, and institutional barriers can limit the victim's ability to exercise their rights. This problem shows that there is a possible distance between normative legal protection (*das sollen*) and the victim's ability to obtain factual protection (*das sein*).

A number of previous studies have made important contributions in explaining legal protection for victims of domestic violence, the implementation of the PKDRT Law, and social factors that affect the courage of victims to express violence. Kasmanita, for example, discussed legal protection for victims of domestic violence by focusing on the framework of the PKDRT Law and the role of law enforcement officials (Kasmanati, 2019). Hanafi and Herlina examined the legal protection and fulfillment of the rights of women victims of domestic violence, including the issue of victims' fear of public assumptions (Hanafi & Herlina, 2023). Meanwhile, La Jamaa's study highlights the implementation of the protection of victims of domestic violence in Indonesian criminal law (La Jamaa, 2014). These studies provide an important foundation for understanding the position of victims and their protection mechanisms.

Previous Indonesian legal studies have explained the statutory framework for domestic violence victim protection and the role of law-enforcement institutions (Kasmanita, 2019; La Jamaa, 2014; Hanafi & Herlina, 2023). In parallel, international empirical studies have examined disclosure and help-seeking through qualitative interviews, surveys, cross-national analyses, and systematic reviews (Evans & Feder, 2016; Goodson & Hayes, 2021; Robinson et al., 2021; Hulley et al., 2023). These two strands are complementary but answer different questions: empirical studies describe how survivors experience barriers, whereas doctrinal legal research evaluates the content, coherence, triggers, and accessibility of legal rights and institutional duties.

The research gap addressed here is therefore methodological as well as substantive. Existing Indonesian legal scholarship has largely discussed victim rights or implementation of the Domestic Violence Law, while

the reporting-barrier literature is predominantly empirical and cross-jurisdictional. Less attention has been given to systematically mapping documented barriers onto the points at which Indonesian protection mechanisms become available, and to asking whether protection is sufficiently accessible before a victim is already connected to the formal system. A normative legal design is appropriate because the principal object of analysis is the architecture of rights, duties, procedures, and institutional responsibilities, not the estimation of the incidence of violence or the causal effect of individual barriers (Bhat, 2020; Taekema, 2021; Negara, 2023).

Accordingly, this study distinguishes between normative legal analysis and empirical contextualization. The legal analysis concerns the Indonesian framework from the enactment of Law Number 23 of 2004 through legal developments in force by September 2026. Empirical studies are used as supporting literature to identify recurrent categories of reporting and help-seeking barriers; they are not treated as a representative sample of Indonesian victims. Official SIMFONI PPA information is likewise used to describe the administrative recording environment and not as a denominator from which an underreporting rate can be calculated.

Against that background, this study asks two questions: (1) how do documented reporting barriers create points of disconnection between victims and the legal protection mechanisms available under Indonesian law; and (2) how should those mechanisms be strengthened across the pre-reporting, reporting, protection/handling, and recovery/access-to-justice stages? The study is titled “Underreporting of Domestic Violence in Indonesia: A Normative Legal Analysis of Reporting Barriers and Victim Protection (2004–2026).”

The expected contribution is a transparent doctrinal mapping that links recurrent reporting barriers to specific legal rights and institutional duties. This approach reframes underreporting from a narrow question of whether a victim reports into a broader access-to-justice question: whether the legal system makes information, safe entry points, protection, assistance, recovery, and remedies practically reachable when a victim faces interlocking personal, social, economic, cultural, and institutional constraints.

Method

This study employs normative (doctrinal) legal research. Doctrinal research systematically identifies, interprets, and synthesizes legal norms and principles to construct arguments about the content and operation of a legal framework (Bhat, 2020; Negara, 2023). The design is prescriptive: it evaluates whether the existing protection architecture is capable, at the normative level, of responding to documented barriers to reporting and formulates legal-strengthening propositions. The study is limited to Indonesia and examines the relevant framework from Law Number 23 of 2004 through legal developments in force by September 2026.

The primary legal materials were selected purposively because they directly regulate domestic violence, recovery, or victim/witness protection: Law Number 23 of 2004 on the Elimination of Domestic Violence; Government Regulation Number 4 of 2006 on the Organization and Cooperation for the Recovery of Domestic Violence Victims; and Law Number 3 of 2006 on the Protection of Witnesses and Victims. The statutory analysis focuses on prohibitions, victim rights, institutional duties, protection triggers, assistance, recovery, confidentiality, reporting, and inter-agency responsibilities. Official Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection materials, including the 2024 SIMFONI PPA report and related 2025 implementation information, are treated as supporting administrative context rather than primary empirical data.

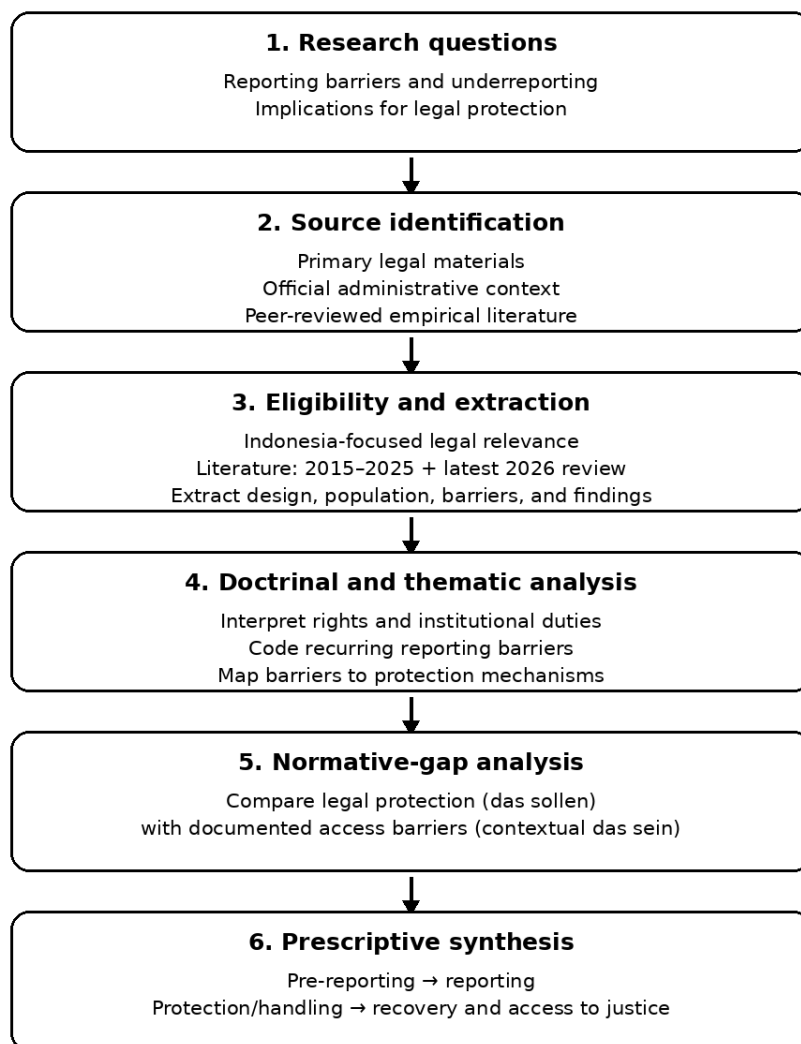
A structured supplementary literature search was conducted in September 2026 using PubMed and Google Scholar to contextualize reporting and help-seeking barriers. Search combinations included (“intimate partner violence” OR “domestic violence”) AND (“help-seeking” OR reporting OR police) AND (barrier* OR access OR “legal protection”). Priority was given to peer-reviewed studies published from January 2015 through December 2025; a 2026 systematic review was additionally included to capture the most recent synthesis. Eligible studies had to examine adult domestic/intimate partner violence and explicitly report barriers or patterns of disclosure, reporting, or formal help-seeking. Child-only studies, perpetrator-only studies, non-peer-reviewed opinion pieces, and studies without a reporting/help-seeking component were excluded. Palermo et al. (2014) was retained as a foundational pre-2015 source on underreporting.

Analysis proceeded in four stages. First, the selected legal materials were read doctrinally to extract legally relevant units: rights of victims, duties of institutions, procedural entry points, protection conditions, service obligations, and recovery mechanisms. Second, the supporting empirical literature was synthesized thematically into five recurring barrier clusters: normalization/private framing; economic dependence and unequal power; fear and safety risk; family pressure, children-related concerns, and stigma; and knowledge/institutional access. Third, each barrier cluster was mapped against the relevant legal mechanisms to identify where access may fail before or after formal reporting. Fourth, a normative gap analysis compared the protection guaranteed by law (*das sollen*) with access constraints documented in the secondary literature and administrative context (*contextual das sein*), followed by a prescriptive synthesis of measures across four protection stages.

No statistical pooling, effect-size calculation, or new prevalence estimate was performed because this is not a meta-analysis and the supporting studies are heterogeneous in jurisdiction, population, and design. Numerical results reported in the comparative matrix are reproduced only as source-specific contextual indicators. SIMFONI PPA records are interpreted as administrative service data and are not used to infer the number of unreported cases. No primary interviews, surveys, or observations of victims were conducted; consequently, this study does not claim that the five barrier clusters constitute a representative distribution among Indonesian victims.

Analytical rigor was strengthened through source triangulation across legislation, official administrative materials, Indonesian legal scholarship, and peer-reviewed empirical/review literature, together with an explicit extraction-and-mapping sequence. An inter-rater reliability coefficient is not reported because the study was designed as a doctrinal synthesis rather than a multi-coder content-analysis study. The absence of primary victim data and formal coder-reliability testing is treated as a limitation and is addressed in the conclusion.

Figure 1. Research design and analytical flow



Source: Authors' research design.

Figure 1. Research design and analytical flow

Results and Discussions

Reporting Barriers That Lead to Underreporting of Domestic Violence and Its Implications for Legal Protection for Victims

Underreporting Domestic Violence as a Problem of Access to Legal Protection

Domestic violence (KDRT) is an act that has received special regulation in the Indonesian legal system. Through Law Number 23 of 2004 concerning the Elimination of Domestic Violence (PKDRT Law), the state not only stipulates a prohibition against various forms of violence within the domestic sphere, but also establishes a protection framework for victims. The establishment of the PKDRT Law is directed at the prevention of domestic violence, victim protection, enforcement of perpetrators, and the maintenance of harmonious and prosperous domestic integrity (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Pasal 4).

Normatively, Article 5 of the PKDRT Law prohibits everyone from committing domestic violence, either in the form of physical, psychological, sexual, or domestic neglect (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Pasal 5). This provision shows a change in the legal perspective on violence in the domestic sphere. Family relationships

can no longer be used as an excuse to place violence as an internal problem that is completely beyond the reach of the law. Domestic violence has been placed as an act that can cause legal consequences as well as demand protection for victims.

Although the legal framework is available, the existence of norms does not automatically ensure that all domestic violence incidents can be included in the legal protection system. Violence data obtained through reporting and recording mechanisms basically only reflect cases that have been known or successfully reached by the system. In this context, administrative data on violence needs to be read carefully because not every violent incident that occurs in society can be recorded in official mechanisms.

The problem is related to the concept of underreporting, which is a situation when the violence experienced by the victim is not reported to the authorities or is not connected to formal reporting mechanisms. Palermo, Bleck, and Peterman show that reliance on formal reporting data can cause gender-based violence to appear much lower than the actual conditions of violence. Their research on data from 24 countries showed that there were significant differences between women who experienced violence and women who reported it to formal sources (Palermo et al., 2014).

This phenomenon can be explained through the concept of the iceberg phenomenon. In this framework, cases seen through the formal reporting system only describe the visible part of the broader problem of violence. The part of violence that is not reported or not included in the recording mechanism is beyond the reach of formal data. In this study, the concept is not used to calculate the number of unreported domestic violence, but to explain the limitations of formal reporting data in describing the overall problem of violence (Palermo et al., 2014).

The issue of underreporting is important from a legal perspective because non-reporting of violence can cause victims to not connect with the protection mechanisms that have been provided by the state. In fact, Article 10 of the PKDRT Law gives victims the right to obtain protection, health services, special treatment, assistance, legal aid, and spiritual guidance services (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Pasal 10).

The relationship between reporting and protection shows that underreporting is not only related to statistical problems or the low number of cases recorded. A more fundamental problem lies in the gap between the protection rights that are normatively available and the ability of victims to access and use these rights in practice. On that basis, to understand the occurrence of underreporting, it is necessary to analyze the barriers that cause victims to not or be reluctant to enter the reporting mechanism.

Analytical Evidence Base and Limits of Quantification

The “results” in this section are the outputs of doctrinal extraction, thematic synthesis, and normative mapping; they are not estimates from a newly collected victim dataset. Underreporting is therefore operationalized qualitatively as a disconnection between experienced violence and entry into formal reporting/service mechanisms. The study does not calculate an underreporting rate. This boundary is important because administrative systems record only cases that reach services, while population surveys and qualitative studies use different denominators, instruments, and contexts.

The comparative literature provides empirical context for the barrier categories. For example, Goodson and Hayes (2021) analyzed 65,530 IPV victims across 31 developing nations and reported that 34.88% sought help, while only 3.24% sought help from formal institutions. McCleary-Sills et al. (2016) reported that only a small share of Tanzanian women who sought support accessed formal services and linked low help-seeking to stigma, normalized violence, and limited agency. Lippy et al. (2020), using a mixed-methods sample of 2,462 hotline survivors, found that mandatory-reporting requirements reduced help-seeking for more than one third of respondents. These figures are not transferable prevalence estimates for Indonesia; they demonstrate why formal case counts and legal availability cannot be equated with practical access.

Table 1. Comparative empirical evidence used to contextualize reporting and help-seeking barriers

Study	Design / context	Source-specific empirical signal	Barrier relevance to the legal analysis
McCleary-Sills et al. (2016)	Qualitative; Tanzania; 104 key-informant interviews + participatory groups (96 community members)	Among women who sought support, formal-service use was reported as limited (10%).	Normalization, stigma/shame, social norms, constrained agency.
Evans & Feder (2016)	Qualitative repeated interviews; 31 women in the UK	Mapped pathways to formal and informal	Disclosure, safety, relationship context, service response.

Study	Design / context	Source-specific empirical signal	Barrier relevance to the legal analysis
Morgan et al. (2016)	Synthesis across five IPV help-seeking studies	support rather than estimating prevalence. Context and gender/sexuality shaped disclosure and service preferences.	Privacy, identity, service accessibility.
Taherkhani et al. (2017)	Qualitative content analysis; 24 abused women; Iran	Four barrier themes: feared consequences, lack of resources, beliefs/attitudes, negative support experiences.	Fear, resources, beliefs, institutional trust.
Satyen et al. (2019)	Systematic review of cross-cultural help-seeking	Help-seeking patterns varied across cultural contexts.	Culture, informal networks, formal-service access.
Mahapatra & Rai (2019)	Qualitative; 9 South Asian immigrant women; United States	Participants described barriers despite reaching formal help.	Immigration/context, family/community norms, service access.
Lippy et al. (2020)	Convergent mixed methods; 2,462 hotline survivors; United States	Mandatory reporting reduced help-seeking for more than one third of survivors.	Institutional rules, trust, unintended deterrence.
Goodson & Hayes (2021)	Cross-national multilevel analysis; N=65,530; 31 developing nations	34.88% sought help; 63.10% of help-seekers approached family; 3.24% used formal institutions.	Informal preference, empowerment, cultural barriers.
Robinson et al. (2021)	Systematic review; U.S. formal help-seeking studies, 2005–2019	Synthesized recurring barriers to formal services.	Service accessibility, distrust, practical and structural barriers.
Lacey et al. (2021)	Nationally representative U.S. Black-women sample with severe physical IPV	Psychiatrist use 13.8%; other mental-health professional use 14.0% among the relevant sample.	Sociodemographic and cultural differences in formal help-seeking.
Shuman et al. (2022)	Quantitative clinic-based study; unauthorized immigrant women; United States	Examined associations between IPV, health, and help-seeking.	Immigration-related vulnerability, access constraints.
Wright et al. (2022)	Systematic review; 17 studies on intimate partner sexual violence	Barriers included stigma, fear, and difficulty identifying abuse.	Recognition, stigma, fear, service access.
Apatinga & Tenkorang (2022)	Qualitative; 15 married/cohabiting women; Ghana	Financial difficulties, lack of social support, and stigma were prominent barriers.	Economic dependence, social support, stigma.
Hulley et al. (2023)	Qualitative metasynthesis; 47 global studies	Synthesized barriers among Black, Asian, minority-ethnic, and immigrant women.	Institutional discrimination, culture, immigration, cultural competence.
Sultana et al. (2023)	Systematic review/meta-synthesis; 35 papers on South Asian women in high-income countries	Five broad themes included sociocultural norms, fear, immigration status, insufficient support, and safety strategies.	Family/community norms, fear, institutional support, safety.
Waller et al. (2023)	Constructivist grounded theory; 30 African American women; United States	Developed a theory of help-seeking from in-depth interviews.	Intersectional barriers, agency, crisis-service navigation.
Rohn & Tenkorang (2024)	Qualitative thematic analysis; 30 women; Ghana	Formal reporting was low; barriers included fear of divorce, stigma, distrust, gender-role norms, and family privacy.	Family privacy, stigma, distrust, fear.

Study	Design / context	Source-specific empirical signal	Barrier relevance to the legal analysis
Vicente-Garcia et al. (2026)	Systematic review; 25 peer-reviewed studies (2013–2024)	18 studies reported personal barriers and 7 highlighted structural/institutional barriers.	Fear, isolation, information, distrust, economic instability, bias, training, coordination.

Table 1 shows convergence across diverse designs on a limited set of mechanisms, but it also shows why effect sizes cannot be pooled for this study: qualitative interviews, nationally representative surveys, hotline samples, cross-national datasets, and systematic reviews do not share a common outcome measure. Accordingly, the empirical literature is used to corroborate and delimit the thematic categories; the juridical conclusions are derived from mapping those categories to Indonesian legal rights and institutional duties.

Reporting Barriers as a Factor in Underreporting

Reporting domestic violence is not always a decision that the victim can make in a state of freedom from pressure. The nature of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, which is generally close, sustainable, and involves living together, can create different conditions from criminal acts committed by people who do not have a personal relationship with the victim. Victims can face economic dependence, threats, family pressure, children's interests, and concerns about social consequences if violence is reported.

Studies on reporting and help-seeking consistently show that barriers are multidimensional rather than reducible to one individual characteristic. Across qualitative studies, surveys, and reviews, recurrent themes include fear of consequences, shame and stigma, social isolation, economic insecurity, family/privacy norms, lack of information, distrust of services, and institutional response problems (Robinson et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2022; Hulley et al., 2023; Vicente-Garcia et al., 2026). These findings support an analytical framework that treats barriers as interacting conditions affecting access to legal protection.

For this doctrinal analysis, the supporting evidence was synthesized into five analytical clusters: (1) normalization of domestic violence and the view that violence is a private problem; (2) economic dependence and unequal power relations; (3) fear of perpetrators and the risk of repeated violence; (4) family pressure, children-related concerns, and social stigma; and (5) limited knowledge and institutional access. The categories are a thematic synthesis of the literature in Table 1 and are then mapped to Indonesian legal provisions; they are not variables measured in a new Indonesian victim sample.

These five barriers do not stand in isolation. Under certain conditions, one barrier can reinforce another. Economic dependence, for example, can increase the victim's fear of losing a place to live or a source of livelihood. Family pressure can reinforce the view that domestic violence issues should be resolved internally. Limited information about protection services can also make it more difficult for victims to find a way out of violent situations. The interaction of these various conditions can ultimately increase the likelihood that victims will not report the violence they experienced.

Normalization of Domestic Violence and the View that Violence is a Private Problem

One barrier cluster concerns the normalization of violence and the view that conflict or violence within the household is a private family matter. Empirical studies in different settings link normalization, stigma, family privacy norms, and anticipated social consequences with delayed or avoided disclosure (McCleary-Sills et al., 2016; Satyen et al., 2019; Rohn & Tenkorang, 2024). In legal terms, such norms can create an access barrier before the formal system is triggered.

In these conditions, the victim may experience difficulties in determining the boundary between domestic conflict and acts that have fallen into the category of violence that is prohibited by law. Violence that takes place repeatedly also has the potential to be considered part of the domestic dynamics that must be tolerated. When this understanding is formed, the victim can delay reporting even though the violence he experiences has met the characteristics of the act prohibited by the PKDRT Law.

This view is not in line with the legal construction built through the PKDRT Law. Article 5 expressly prohibits everyone from committing domestic violence (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Pasal 5). This provision shows that family relations do not remove the unlawful nature of violence committed against household members. At this point, there is a possible gap between the substance of the law and the legal culture of the community. Soerjono Soekanto explained that the effectiveness of law enforcement is influenced by several factors, including the law itself, law enforcement, facilities or facilities, society, and culture (Soekanto, 2008). Social and cultural factors become relevant in the problem of domestic violence because values, habits, and social views can encourage or even hinder a person in using legal mechanisms.

The normalization of violence can affect the victim's perception of the seriousness of the act experienced. If violence is seen as a domestic problem that should not be known to outsiders, the victim may choose to remain silent or postpone reporting. From the perspective of underreporting, this condition causes some violent incidents to not enter the legal mechanism even though the prohibition against these acts is normatively available.

Economic Dependence and Power Relations

A second barrier cluster concerns economic dependence and unequal power relations. Victims who depend on a perpetrator for income, housing, children's needs, or immigration-related security may face material risks when considering disclosure. Qualitative studies have identified financial difficulties, lack of resources, and dependence-related vulnerability as significant constraints on help-seeking (Taherkhani et al., 2017; Apatinga & Tenkorang, 2022; Hulley et al., 2023).

This issue has direct relevance to the PKDRT Law. Article 9 paragraph (2) regulates domestic neglect that results in economic dependence by limiting and/or prohibiting a person from working properly so that the victim is under the control of that person. The regulation shows that the economic dimension in household relations is not just a social problem, but can be directly related to the form of violence recognized by law.

In the context of underreporting, economic dependency has a more complex position. Economic conditions can be part of the form of violence as well as a factor that prevents victims from reporting the violence. The victim may know that he or she has the right to legal protection, but at the same time consider the economic consequences that may arise after the report is made.

The PKDRT Law gives victims the right to obtain protection, health services, assistance, legal aid, and various other forms of services (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Pasal 10). However, the existence of these rights does not necessarily eliminate the economic dependence that is part of the victim's life. This condition shows that there is a difference between normative ownership of rights and the actual ability to use these rights.

On that basis, economic dependence and power relations need to be understood as one of the structural obstacles to underreporting. Not reporting violence does not always mean that the victim is denied legal protection. In certain circumstances, the decision can be formed from consideration of the socio-economic risks that must be borne if the victim enters the legal process.

Fear of Perpetrators and the Risk of Repeated Violence

Fear of the perpetrator and of repeated or escalated violence forms a third barrier cluster. Victims may anticipate threats, retaliation, loss of housing, risks to children, or adverse consequences after disclosure. Fear and safety concerns recur across qualitative research and systematic reviews of formal help-seeking (Evans & Feder, 2016; Wright et al., 2022; Vicente-Garcia et al., 2026).

These concerns have a special character in domestic violence because victims and perpetrators often still have an ongoing relationship. They may stay in the same house, have marital relationships, have children together, or have economic dependence. Therefore, reporting does not always mean that the victim can immediately sever the entire relationship with the perpetrator.

The PKDRT Law has actually provided an instrument of protection for victims. Article 10 gives the right to victims to obtain protection, while Article 16 regulates the obligation of the police to provide temporary protection after knowing or receiving reports about the occurrence of domestic violence (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Pasal 10 dan Pasal 16).

However, this provision shows an important problem in the context of underreporting. Some protection mechanisms can only work when the authorities have known or received reports. Meanwhile, one of the factors that cause victims not to report can be in the form of concerns for safety after entering the legal process.

This situation creates a close relationship between the victim's need for a sense of security and his or her ability to enter the reporting mechanism. Victims need security guarantees in order to dare to report, while some legal protection instruments work after the victim is connected to the system. This issue shows that the effectiveness of protection is determined not only by the existence of legal instruments, but also by the ability of the system to create conditions that allow victims to access these instruments safely.

Family Pressure, Child Interests, and Social Stigma

Family pressure, children-related concerns, and social stigma form a fourth barrier cluster. Victims may weigh marital continuity, children's welfare, relationships with extended family, and the social consequences of disclosure. Studies across cultural contexts identify stigma, shame, family privacy, and sociocultural expectations as factors that can redirect survivors toward informal resolution or discourage disclosure (McCleary-Sills et al., 2016; Sultana et al., 2023; Rohn & Tenkorang, 2024).

Such pressure can be an encouragement to maintain a household, encouragement to resolve problems in the family, or concerns that reporting will stigmatize both victims and children. In certain circumstances, victims may view reporting as an act that has the potential to magnify family conflicts rather than as a way to obtain protection.

In fact, the PKDRT Law was formed based on the principles of respect for human rights, gender justice and equality, non-discrimination, and victim protection (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Pasal 3). The framework shows that the integrity of the household cannot be interpreted as a reason to override the safety and rights of the victim.

Social pressure is also related to social and cultural factors in the effectiveness of the law. When the social environment stigmatizes the victim who reports, the obstacle to the use of the law no longer only comes from the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, but also from the social environment in which the victim is located (Soekanto, 2008).

In the context of underreporting, this situation can cause victims to choose not to disclose the violence they experienced. This means that the social environment can be a factor that increases the distance between the violence experienced and the violence that manages to enter the legal protection system.

Knowledge and Access to Legal Mechanisms

The fifth barrier cluster concerns knowledge of rights and practical access to legal or support mechanisms. The existence of legislation does not guarantee that victims know which institutions can be contacted, understand procedures, trust service providers, or can navigate fragmented services. Systematic reviews identify information deficits, distrust, negative service experiences, and institutional barriers as recurring obstacles to formal help-seeking (Robinson et al., 2021; Hulley et al., 2023; Vicente-Garcia et al., 2026).

The PKDRT Law gives victims the right to receive assistance and legal assistance (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Pasal 18). In addition, Article 18 regulates the obligation of the police to provide services to victims and provide information to victims regarding the right to receive services and assistance.

The arrangement shows that victims should not be burdened with all the responsibility to find and understand their own protection mechanisms. Authorized institutions also have a role to play in helping victims understand the rights and services available.

Problems arise when there is a gap between the rights available and the information that the victim can access. Victims who do not know the reporting mechanism or do not know where to get help may face obstacles even before entering the legal process.

From the perspective of legal effectiveness, these conditions are related to the importance of supporting facilities and facilities. Legal norms require institutional and service support in order to be used effectively by the community (Soekanto, 2008). Therefore, limited information and access cannot be seen solely as a personal problem of the victim, but also as a problem of the legal system's ability to reach those who need protection.

Juridical Analysis of Reporting Barriers and the Occurrence of Underreporting

The foregoing analysis shows that underreporting is not produced by a single barrier. Normalization operates at the cultural level; economic dependence and unequal power operate within domestic relations; fear of perpetrators concerns safety; family pressure and stigma operate in the social environment; and limited knowledge or access concerns the ability to use institutional mechanisms. These dimensions interact and can reinforce one another. Their juridical significance is summarized in Table 2, which maps each barrier cluster to the relevant legal basis and supporting empirical literature.

Table 2. Normative mapping of reporting barriers to Indonesian legal protection mechanisms

Reporting barrier	Dimension	Legal basis	Contribution to underreporting	Empirical corroboration
Normalization of domestic violence and the view that violence is a private problem	Cultural	Article 5, Law No. 23/2004	May encourage victims to frame violence as an internal matter and delay formal disclosure.	McCleary-Sills et al. (2016); Satyen et al. (2019); Rohn & Tenkorang (2024)
Economic dependence and unequal power relations	Economic / structural	Article 9(2) and Article 10, Law No. 23/2004	May constrain the practical choices available to victims when reporting threatens housing, income, or dependants.	Taherkhani et al. (2017); Apatinga & Tenkorang (2022); Hulley et al. (2023)
Fear of perpetrators and repeated violence	Safety	Article 10 and Articles 16–18, Law No. 23/2004	May deter entry into reporting where victims anticipate retaliation or escalating risk.	Evans & Feder (2016); Wright et al. (2022); Vicente-Garcia et al. (2026)
Family pressure, children-related concerns, and stigma	Social / cultural	Articles 3 and 5, Law No. 23/2004	May favor informal settlement or silence when disclosure is expected to produce family or social costs.	McCleary-Sills et al. (2016); Sultana et al. (2023); Rohn & Tenkorang (2024)
Limited knowledge and institutional access	Institutional	Article 10 and Article 18, Law No. 23/2004; recovery framework under PP No. 4/2006	May prevent victims from identifying, reaching, or effectively using available protection and assistance.	Robinson et al. (2021); Hulley et al. (2023); Vicente-Garcia et al. (2026)

The table shows that the five barriers have different characteristics, but are interrelated in shaping the victim's decision not to report or delay. In the end, all of these obstacles boil down to one legal issue, namely the limited ability of the victim to access the protection mechanisms that have actually been provided by laws and regulations.

This issue can be further analyzed through the perspective of legal protection Philipus M. Hadjon. Legal protection is basically related to efforts to provide protection to legal subjects through available legal tools (Hadjon, 1987). Within the framework of such protection, legal mechanisms are not only important because norms have been established, but also because they must be able to provide protection that can be used by those in need.

If this perspective is applied to domestic violence, the Domestic Violence Law has provided various protection instruments for victims. The prohibition of domestic violence and prevention provisions show the dimension of protection before the offense develops, while the reporting mechanism, temporary protection, assistance, legal aid, and case handling provide instruments after violence occurs.

The problem of underreporting shows that the existence of these instruments does not automatically guarantee its use by the victim. Barriers can arise before the victim successfully enters the legal system. The victim may have rights, but is unable to exercise those rights due to fear, economic dependence, social pressure, limited information, or institutional barriers.

Soerjono Soekanto's perspective provides an additional explanation of this relationship. The effectiveness of law enforcement is influenced by legal factors, law enforcement, facilities or facilities, society, and culture (Soekanto, 2008). In the issue of underreporting, the legal substance in the form of the PKDRT Law has provided a basis for protection, but the success of such protection still depends on the apparatus, service facilities, community conditions, and a developing legal culture.

This shows that the problem of underreporting does not only show that there are shortcomings in legal norms. It can also show that there is a gap between norms, institutions, and victims as recipients of protection. If one of these elements does not work effectively, victims can remain outside the reach of the protection mechanism even though normatively the law has given them rights.

Implications of Underreporting for Legal Protection of Victims

The reporting barriers described earlier have direct consequences on the victim's ability to obtain legal protection. The PKDRT Law has provided various rights to victims, including the right to protection, health services, special treatment, mentoring, legal aid, and other services (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Pasal 10).

These rights presuppose a practical connection between the victim and the protection mechanism. When violence is not disclosed or available services cannot be reached, legally guaranteed rights may remain unrealized in practice. In this sense, underreporting can generate a protection gap: at the normative level the victim is a rights-holder, while at the access level the use of those rights may be constrained by safety, economic, social, informational, or institutional conditions.

A further implication concerns the ability of the legal system to recognize and respond to violence. Administrative records describe cases that have entered a reporting or service pathway; they cannot, by themselves, identify the number of incidents remaining outside that pathway. Palermo, Bleck, and Peterman (2014) showed that formal reporting can substantially understate gender-based violence, while cross-national evidence also indicates that formal institutional help-seeking may comprise only a small share of overall help-seeking (Goodson & Hayes, 2021).

This study therefore does not equate the difference between experienced violence and recorded cases with a single measurable "underreporting rate." Differences can also reflect service coverage, recording rules, data integration, and administrative practices. SIMFONI PPA data are used only to contextualize the formal recording environment. The juridical issue is whether barriers can prevent some victims from reaching mechanisms that activate protection, not how many unreported incidents exist.

A more fundamental issue lies in the way in which the effectiveness of legal protection is understood. Victim protection is not sufficiently assessed based on the existence or absence of norms that grant rights. Protection also needs to be seen from the ability of victims to know, reach, use, and benefit from these rights safely.

Such perspective is important so that the victim is not placed as the sole party responsible for the non-reporting. When victims face economic dependence, threats, social pressures, stigma, information limitations, or institutional barriers, the decision not to report may be the result of broader circumstances than simply individual choices.

The doctrinal synthesis therefore identifies five interrelated access-barrier clusters: normalization/private framing, economic dependence and unequal power, fear and safety risk, family/children-related pressure and stigma, and limited knowledge or institutional access. Their relevance is supported by the comparative empirical literature summarized in Table 1, while their legal significance is established through the statutory mapping in Table 2.

If it is related to the perspective of legal protection, this condition shows that the availability of legal instruments does not automatically ensure that victims can benefit from these instruments (Hadjon, 1987). Meanwhile, the perspective of the effectiveness of law enforcement shows that the work of victim protection is influenced by the relationship between the substance of the law, law enforcement officials, facilities, society, and culture.

Based on this analysis, the reporting barriers that cause underreporting of domestic violence cannot be understood only as a matter of individual decisions of the victim. Underreporting is formed through the interaction of cultural, economic and power, security, social, and institutional factors that can limit the victim's ability to enter the legal mechanism. This condition has implications for legal protection because victims who are not or have not been connected to the reporting mechanism have the potential to experience limitations in obtaining protection, assistance, legal assistance, services, and access to justice that has been guaranteed by the PKDRT Law.

The central juridical finding is thus not a quantified prevalence of underreporting, but a structural access problem: Indonesian law provides protection rights and institutional duties, yet some mechanisms depend on victims first becoming visible to the system. The doctrinal task is to reduce that access gap by strengthening safe pre-reporting information and support, reporting pathways, immediate protection and handling, and recovery/access to justice.

Strengthening Legal Protection Mechanisms for Victims of Domestic Violence (KDRT) to Overcome Underreporting and Ensure Access to Reporting, Protection, and Justice

The preceding analysis shows that underreporting of domestic violence cannot be reduced to a victim's reluctance to report. The supporting literature identifies interacting constraints—economic dependence, unequal power relations, fear of perpetrators, family pressure, social stigma, normalization of violence, and limited information or institutional access—that can prevent or delay entry into the legal protection system even where statutory rights exist.

The juridical implication is that the existence of legal norms is necessary but insufficient. Protection must also be accessible at the points where documented barriers operate. Strengthening legal protection should therefore narrow the distance between normatively available rights and victims' practical ability to obtain information, safe reporting, protection, assistance, recovery, and access to justice.

Normatively, the PKDRT Law has provided a fairly comprehensive basis for protection. Article 4 sets the goals of eliminating domestic violence, which includes the prevention of domestic violence, victim protection, enforcement of perpetrators, and the maintenance of harmonious and prosperous domestic integrity. Article 5 prohibits everyone from committing domestic violence, whether in the form of physical, psychological, sexual, or domestic violence (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Pasal 5). The framework emphasizes that domestic violence is no longer a purely private matter, but an act that is within the scope of legal protection.

Protection of victims is formulated concretely in Article 10 of the PKDRT Law, which recognizes rights to protection, health services, treatment that safeguards confidentiality, assistance, legal assistance, and spiritual guidance (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Article 10). The recovery dimension is further supported by Government Regulation Number 4 of 2006, which regulates the organization and cooperation of recovery services for domestic violence victims (Republik Indonesia, 2006). These instruments show that protection is intended to extend beyond criminal enforcement to service provision and recovery.

The framework can be understood through the concept of legal protection by Philipus M. Hadjon which distinguishes legal protection into preventive and repressive. Preventive protection is related to efforts to prevent violations or provide opportunities for legal subjects to obtain protection before losses occur, while repressive protection is related to settlement after a violation occurs (Hadjon, 1987). In the context of domestic violence, the two forms of protection need to be placed as a series. Victim protection should not only function when the case has entered the legal process, but also needs to create conditions that allow victims to obtain information, assistance, security, and access to legal mechanisms from the initial stage.

This problem becomes important when associated with underreporting. Victims who are afraid of the perpetrator, economically dependent, face family pressure, or do not understand the legal mechanism may be beyond the scope of protection before a report is made. Therefore, strengthening legal protection needs to be directed at the entire range of victim access, starting from the pre-reporting stage, reporting, protection and handling, to restoration and access to justice.

Strengthening Protection at the Pre-Reporting Stage

The preceding analysis shows that the problem of underreporting often arises before a victim comes into contact with law-enforcement officials or victim-service institutions. Economic dependence, perpetrator control, threats, children's interests, fear of the consequences of reporting, and limited knowledge can make it difficult for victims to determine legal steps. These conditions demonstrate that reporting is not always a decision that can be made simply and immediately.

Therefore, strengthening protection needs to begin through access to legal information, initial consultation, mentoring, risk identification, and service referrals. The strengthening is an optimization of the victim's right to obtain protection, assistance, and legal assistance as guaranteed in Article 10 of the PKDRT Law (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Pasal 10). Information about the victim's rights, the institutions that can be contacted, the forms of protection available, and the choice of services need to be obtained before the victim decides whether and how to make a report.

Assistance at an early stage is also important because it can be a link between the victim and the legal system. Victims not only need knowledge of the rules, but also need help to understand the options available according to the conditions and level of risk they face. This approach allows victims to make more conscious decisions without placing the entire burden of legal proceedings on the victim.

Strengthening pre-reporting is ultimately a form of preventive protection. The orientation is not to force victims to report, but to create safe and informative conditions so that victims are able to make legal choices and get help from before entering the reporting process (Hadjon, 1987).

Strengthening Safe and Victim-Oriented Reporting Mechanisms

The next step is to ensure that reporting mechanisms are securely accessible and provide trust to victims. The availability of formal reporting channels will not be enough to reduce underreporting if victims still find the process risky, unclear, or do not provide adequate protections.

The PKDRT Law gives responsibility to the police in this process. Article 18 stipulates that the police are obliged to provide services to victims and provide information to victims about the right to receive services and assistance (Republik Indonesia, 2004, pasal 18). This provision shows that the receipt of reports should not be understood as a mere administrative action, but as part of the victim's service and protection.

On that basis, reporting mechanisms need to be developed with a victim-oriented approach. This approach at least includes the provision of information about victims' rights, respect for confidentiality, victim-free treatment, attention to special needs, and identification of safety risks that may arise after reporting.

This need is related to Soerjono Soekanto's theory of legal effectiveness which states that the effectiveness of law enforcement is influenced by legal factors, law enforcement, facilities or facilities, society, and culture (Soekanto, 2008). This means that the existence of norms that provide rights to victims is not enough if the services of the apparatus, facilities, social environment, and legal culture have not supported the use of these rights.

Strengthening the reporting mechanism therefore does not always have to be done through the establishment of new criminal norms. Strengthening can be directed at increasing the capacity of the apparatus, victim service standards, delivering information about rights, protecting confidentiality, and assessing the needs and risks of victims. These mechanisms are important to build victims' trust in the legal system and reduce obstacles when victims first come into contact with legal institutions.

Strengthening Temporary Protection and Victim Security

Safety is an important aspect in overcoming underreporting because fear of perpetrators can be a reason for victims to avoid reporting. These risks can be in the form of threats, intimidation, retaliation, or repeated violence, especially when the victim still lives with the perpetrator or still has a marital, economic, and child-rearing relationship with the perpetrator.

The PKDRT Law has actually provided a temporary protection mechanism. Article 16 paragraph (1) stipulates that the police are obliged to provide temporary protection to victims within 1 × 24 hours from knowing or receiving a report of domestic violence. The temporary protection is given for a maximum of seven days. Furthermore, Article 16 paragraph (3) regulates the obligation of the police to submit a request for a protection order to the court within 1 × 24 hours from the provision of protection (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Pasal 16 ayat 3).

The arrangement suggests that victim protection does not have to wait for the criminal process to be completed. The law has provided instruments to respond to the victim's security needs at an early stage after a report is received. Article 17 also opens up the possibility for the police to cooperate with health workers, social workers, volunteer companions, and/or spiritual counselors in providing temporary protection (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Pasal 17).

However, there are problems relevant to underreporting. The temporary protection basically works after the police know or receive the report. Meanwhile, some victims do not report because they feel that it is not safe to enter the legal mechanism. Therefore, strengthening protection needs to include risk assessments and early access to security assistance, so that victims who are in high-risk conditions can obtain information and protection referrals before or when reporting.

Strengthening Legal Assistance and Assistance

The preceding analysis of limited knowledge and institutional access shows that victims are not always in a position to understand and use legal mechanisms independently. In these conditions, assistance functions as a link between the victim and the legal system.

Article 10 letter d of the PKDRT Law gives victims the right to receive assistance from social workers and legal aid (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Pasal 10). This right shows that the victim is not burdened to

understand all legal procedures alone. Assistance can help victims understand their rights, legal choices, reporting procedures, and services that can be obtained.

In the context of underreporting, assistance should be available from the initial stage and not solely provided after a criminal report has been made. Early access to assistance can help victims assess risks, understand available options, and determine the appropriate steps for their needs.

This need is in line with the policy of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection which places paralegals as one of the parties who can be a link between victims and the legal system and justice (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak Republik Indonesia, 2025). Therefore, strengthening assistance needs to be directed so that information and legal assistance can be reached more easily by victims, including before criminal reports are made.

Strengthening Service Integration and Inter-Agency Coordination

Domestic violence not only causes criminal problems, but can also give rise to health, psychological, social, economic, security, and legal needs. This condition makes victim protection cannot depend on one institution alone.

The PKDRT Law has provided a basis for cooperation between parties. Article 17 allows the police to cooperate with health workers, social workers, volunteer companions, and spiritual advisors in providing temporary protection (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Pasal 17). Article 10 also shows the involvement of various parties in providing protection, services, assistance, and assistance to victims.

Problems can arise when victims have to go to different institutions separately to obtain different services. Fragmented processes can add to the administrative and psychological burden, especially when victims have to repeatedly describe their experiences of violence. For victims who face fear and pressure from the beginning, these conditions can be an additional barrier to staying connected to the protection system.

Therefore, strengthening protection needs to be directed at the integration of services and coordination between institutions. Victims should not be burdened with coordinating all their own protection needs. Institutions that receive victims for the first time need to have a referral mechanism that allows legal, health, psychological, social, and security needs to be addressed in a more integrated manner.

Strengthening the Reporting and Recording System

Underreporting also has implications for the state's ability to recognize patterns of violence and formulate policies. Administrative data basically comes from cases that have entered the reporting mechanism or service. Therefore, the number of cases recorded cannot be directly understood as the overall incidence of domestic violence that occurs in the community.

SIMFONI PPA functions as an administrative information system for recording and reporting violence against women and children through participating service mechanisms (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak Republik Indonesia, 2025b). Such records are valuable for case management and policy context, but they represent cases known to participating institutions rather than a population-based measure of all violence occurring in society.

For that reason, improvements in recording cannot by themselves resolve underreporting. A recording system can capture only cases that enter a reporting or service pathway. Strengthening data systems should therefore be paired with measures that improve awareness, safe access, referral, confidentiality, institutional responsiveness, and continuity of assistance before and after reporting.

Strengthening Protection in the Legal Effectiveness Framework

The series of reinforcements shows that underreporting cannot be overcome through a single stand-alone policy. The existence of the PKDRT Law is a normative foundation, but the effectiveness of protection depends on the application of norms by the authorities, the availability of service facilities, community support, and legal cultural conditions.

Soerjono Soekanto's theory provides a framework to see this relationship through five factors of law enforcement effectiveness, namely law, law enforcement, facilities or facilities, society, and culture (Soekanto, 2008). In the context of domestic violence, these factors are reflected in the existence of the PKDRT Law, the quality of the response of the authorities, the availability of services and assistance, social support or pressure, and cultural values that can encourage or hinder reporting.

The framework reinforces the finding that underreporting is not properly understood as a result of individual decisions of the victim. This phenomenon can also indicate the limitations of the system in

reaching victims. If victims experience obstacles at the information, reporting, security, assistance, or service stages, the existence of norms has not fully resulted in effective protection.

From Hadjon's perspective, this situation shows the importance of connecting preventive and repressive protection. Preventive protection is needed so that victims can obtain information, assistance, and a sense of security before entering the legal process. Repressive protection is needed to ensure that victims continue to receive protection, treatment, recovery, and justice after the legal process has taken place (Hadjon, 1987).

Model of Strengthening Legal Protection Mechanisms to Overcome Underreporting

Based on the overall analysis, strengthening the legal protection mechanism for victims of domestic violence can be formulated in four interrelated stages, namely pre-reporting; reporting; protection and handling; and restoration and access to justice.

First, the pre-reporting stage is directed at providing legal information, initial consultation, mentoring, risk identification, and service referrals. This stage is aimed at reducing barriers that make victims unable or unwilling to enter the legal mechanism.

Second, the reporting stage is directed at providing mechanisms that are easily accessible, safe, maintain confidentiality, and provide clear information about victims' rights. The response of the authorities needs to build a sense of security and trust so that reporting does not become a new source of obstacles.

Third, the protection and handling stages include the optimization of temporary protection, health services, assistance, legal assistance, and coordination between institutions according to the needs and level of risk of victims. The normative basis regarding temporary protection and cooperation between parties has been provided in the PKDRT Law (Republik Indonesia, 2004, Pasal 10, 16, dan 17).

Fourth, the recovery and access to justice stage ensures that protection does not stop at the receipt of reports or processes against the perpetrator. Victims still need assistance, recovery, and access to justice so that the legal process does not create new vulnerabilities. The four stages form a series: Pre-reporting → Reporting → Protection and Handling → Restoration and Access to Justice.

The series shows that strategies to address underreporting are not enough geared towards increasing the number of reports. A more appropriate orientation is to build a system that allows victims to know their rights, get help, access reporting safely, get protection during the process, and obtain redress and justice.

The four-stage model directly links the identified barriers with legal responses. Normalization and information deficits require stronger pre-reporting legal information and referral; fear and safety risks require confidential, rapid, and protective reporting pathways; economic dependence and social pressure require coordinated assistance and recovery; and institutional barriers require clearer procedures, trained personnel, and inter-agency accountability. In this way, the model converts the doctrinal mapping into a prescriptive access-to-justice framework.

Strengthening legal protection for victims of domestic violence to overcome underreporting and ensuring access to reporting, protection, and justice needs to be carried out in layers and in an integrated manner. The strengthening includes: (1) expanding access to pre-reporting through information, consultation, initial assistance, risk identification, and service referrals; (2) implementing reporting mechanisms that are safe, accessible, confidential, and victim-oriented; (3) optimization of temporary protection and security assessment; (4) strengthening legal assistance and assistance; (5) integration of services and inter-agency coordination; (6) strengthening the reporting and recording system as a supporting instrument for protection and policies; and (7) strengthening restoration and access to justice.

The model places underreporting as a matter of access to the legal protection system, not just a matter of the victim's courage to report. The juridical contribution of this research lies in the affirmation that the effectiveness of domestic violence victim protection is not enough to be judged from the existence of norms, but also from the ability of the legal system to create conditions that allow victims to know their rights, access reporting, obtain security, get assistance, be protected during the process, and obtain recovery and justice.

Conclusions

This normative legal study concludes that underreporting of domestic violence in Indonesia should be analyzed primarily as an access-to-protection problem rather than as a numerical gap that can be calculated from administrative records alone. The doctrinal and thematic synthesis identifies five recurrent barrier

clusters—normalization/private framing, economic dependence and unequal power, fear and safety risk, family/children-related pressure and stigma, and limited knowledge or institutional access—that can disconnect victims from formal protection mechanisms. The legal framework, particularly Law Number 23 of 2004, provides important victim rights and institutional duties, while Government Regulation Number 4 of 2006 addresses recovery cooperation and Law Number 3 of 2006 broadens the contemporary witness-and-victim protection framework. The key juridical issue is accessibility: several protective mechanisms function most effectively after authorities or services become aware of a case, whereas important barriers operate before that point. This creates a potential gap between normative protection (*das sollen*) and practical access to protection (*contextual das sein*). To narrow that gap, this study proposes a four-stage protection model. The pre-reporting stage should strengthen legal information, confidential consultation, risk identification, assistance, and referral. The reporting stage should provide safe, understandable, confidentiality-sensitive entry points. The protection and handling stage should coordinate temporary protection, health services, legal assistance, and other victim support. The recovery and access-to-justice stage should ensure continuity of recovery, remedies, and institutional follow-up rather than treating the filing of a report as the endpoint of protection. The contribution of the study is therefore doctrinal and prescriptive, not causal or prevalence-based. The empirical studies summarized in the comparative matrix are used to contextualize recurring barriers and to test the plausibility of the legal mapping; they do not constitute an Indonesian victim sample, and their numerical findings are not pooled or generalized to Indonesia. This study has four main limitations. First, it does not collect primary data from victims, service providers, police, courts, or other institutions. Second, SIMFONI PPA data are administrative records and cannot be used to calculate the number or proportion of unreported incidents. Third, the supporting empirical literature spans different jurisdictions, populations, and research designs, limiting direct transferability to Indonesia. Fourth, the thematic synthesis is a doctrinal supporting procedure rather than a multi-coder systematic review, and no inter-rater reliability coefficient is reported. Future socio-legal research should empirically test the five barrier clusters and the proposed four-stage model with victims and frontline institutions in Indonesia, examine regional variation in service accessibility, and evaluate whether the current legal framework reduces delays and discontinuities between disclosure, reporting, protection, recovery, and access to justice. Such research would complement the present doctrinal analysis without converting administrative case counts into unsupported estimates of underreporting.

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